

# Domestic Composting Guide



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# Getting Started

## Location

Your composter should be placed in a location that is not under direct sun. Keep away from trees and bush so roots cannot reach the content. Make sure to place your composter in an easy access location.

## Bottom preparation

- 1- Once the ideal location is chosen, work the ground with a shovel to allow the decomposer organisms into the composter. A hard ground will not allow penetration of the organisms in the composter. If there is lawn underneath the composter, remove it and put it face against the ground. (Do not lay on concrete, rock or asphalt).
- 2- Install the composter on the worked ground.

## Getting started

Make a hole in the ground at the bottom of the composter. Put 5 or 6 centimeters thick of small branches or twigs in the hole. Then put a layer of dead leaves, compost or earth on top of the branches. Preparing the bottom of the composter will allow a better aeration, stabilize humidity level in the composter and will prevent matter from compacting onto the ground.

You can then start filling your composter with home and garden waste. Avoid filling your composter too quickly but you should put waste in it on a daily basis.

The secret of good compost remains in the balance between green and brown waste put into the composter. It is important to make sure both green and brown waste are mixed together. Start by putting a lot more brown waste than green waste in your composter so you can reach a correct balance between carbonaceous and nitrogenous matters. Measure 2 to 3 part of brown waste for each part of green waste. Afterwards, measure one part of brown waste for one part of green waste.



## Humidity

Humidity helps bacteria development, that is why your composter should always be humid but not damp (as a wet sponge would be) so air can circulate. The vents located on the upper part of your composter can help control air circulation and humidity level in your composter. Just turn the lid to adjust vents. Leftovers help keeping humidity level adequate. During Summer, add a little water to keep humidity level right.

It is recommended to alternate humid and dry layers of waste. Layers should be 5 to 15 centimeters thick. Mix the content of the composter once a week with a fork. Add a shovelful of earth to balance humus if necessary.

Humidify newspapers and cardboards before putting into your composter.

## Aeration

It is important to open the bottom vents of your composter so oxygen can penetrate the composter and help waste decomposition and elimination of bad odours. If aeration is not properly done, your waste will rot and start to stink. Clear vents and aerate the compost regularly with a fork, a rake, a shovel or an aerator every 7 to 10 days. The better way to bring air into the compost is to mix it with a fork.

Do not compact layers of waste so air can circulate in the composter.

# What can be composted ?



	RECOMMENDED	LESS RECOMMENDED	PROHIBITED
KITCHEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit peeling and skin</li> <li>• Vegetable peeling</li> <li>• Rotten goods</li> <li>• Coffee filters, Tea bags</li> <li>• Egg shells</li> <li>• Bread, Pastas</li> <li>• Cooked meal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citrus fruit peelings</li> <li>• In small quantities :                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fish leftovers</li> <li>- Deli meat</li> <li>- Cheese crusts</li> </ul>                             (Always cover with earth)                         </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stone pits</li> <li>• Shells</li> <li>• Bones</li> <li>• Large quantity of meat</li> <li>• Juices and sauces</li> <li>• Cardboard packaging</li> <li>• Dairies</li> <li>• Colour magazines or pictures</li> </ul>
HOME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newspaper, cardboard</li> <li>• Hairs, wood fiber</li> <li>• Pot plants, cut flowers, cotton, wool, silk</li> <li>• Sawdust</li> <li>• Old earth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other plants</li> <li>• Chicken faeces</li> <li>• Pig-dung</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glazed or waxed paper</li> <li>• Colourprinted paper</li> <li>• Human faeces</li> <li>• Vacuum cleaner bags</li> <li>• Oil, rubber</li> <li>• Plastic</li> </ul>
GARDEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branches, leaves</li> <li>• Cut grass</li> <li>• Vegetable waste</li> <li>• Weed</li> <li>• Wood ashes</li> <li>• Dung</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birch, poplar and hazel tree branches</li> <li>• Large quantities of grass or hay</li> <li>• Ill plants</li> <li>• Weed with seeds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oak</li> <li>• Large branches or treated wood</li> </ul>

## How to speed up the compost cycle?

Great aeration is key to hasten the process. This can be a heavy task but it doesn't have to be!



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# What can be composted ?

It is very important for the balance of the compost to well-mix waste. The following chart will help you adjust to find the right balance.

	CARBONACEOUS (Brown)	NITROGENOUS (green)
Grass		+++
Fruit & vegetable peelings		++
Whole vegetables	+	++
Dung	+++	++
Weed	+++	+
Branches and twigs	+++	
Straw	+++	
Sawdust	+++	

The more diversified waste you put in your composter is, better your compost will be. Avoid all treated matters or chemicals or you will diminish the quality of your compost as well as spreading chemicals in it.

There is no miracle recipe for a good compost but here are a few tips to help you adjust carbon and nitrogen levels :

- 1 If the compost doesn't heat up a little : add green waste (nitrogen)
- 2 If there is a strong ammonia odour : add brown waste (carbon)
- 3 If there is a strong rotten eggs odour : mix the compost with a fork to add air into it.

## How to easily stoke kitchen waste ?

Use a hermetic container equipped with a coal filter to store kitchen waste. This way, you will not have to put the kitchen waste directly in the composter every day.



Put some shredded newspaper at the bottom of the container before using it to store your kitchen waste. This way, waste will not stick on the container and your container will stay clean.



# Composting cycles

## The seasons of composting

The best time of the year to make compost is from Spring to the end of Fall. As you will have filled your composter throughout the Spring and Summer, you will have almost ready compost around the end of Fall.

If the compost is ready, store in weather safe bags and use next Spring. If the compost is not ready yet, remove from the composter and put on the ground under a plastic film to protect from weather conditions. The compost will complete maturation during Winter so you can use it next Spring. You can start putting new waste in your composter during Winter without having to mix it. When Spring come, just mix accumulated waste with carbon-rich matters. Winter should be considered as a "storage" phase more than a "composting" phase.

## Harvesting

The fun of composting comes from the possibility to use the new matter when Spring comes. How to know that compost is ready? Here are two signs that will help you know if your compost is ready to be used :

- 1- Very few of the original waste is still recognizable (maybe a few branches, egg shells or old leaves). The compost will have the colour and texture of rich earth.
- 2- The compost will have a stable temperature. (No temperature augmentation)

## Compost uses

Once compost is ready, here is how you can use it :

Use compost in the garden, flowerbeds or underneath trees to feed roots.

## A few simple rules to remember

- Grind or cut big waste to multiply attack surfaces for micro-organism (branches and twigs should be grounded before going into the composter).
- Mix waste, avoid thick layers of the same matter. Mix leftovers with newspaper, cardboard or sawdust.
- Add a little earth to enrich the compost with micro-organisms. (Especially important during start-up).
- Mix compost once in a while. Carefully mix grass, avoid layer more than 15 centimeters thick.
- Make sure vents are clear.

## TEA recipe !

This is an original way to fertilize your pot plants :

Fill a cloth or fabric bag with mature compost, immerse in tap water a let it infuse until water colour is tea-like. Water your plants with this preparation to witness significant results.

## A few useful tips

- 1- Always cover large quantities of food with earth or newspaper so bugs won't come around.
- 2- Even if meat and fish can be composted, it is always better not to put any in your composter to avoid the visit of small animals.

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